

A Study on Instructional Leadership Roles by Principals in Type 1AB and Type 1C Schools in Sri Lanka

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Abstract: The main purpose of this study was to examine how principals engage in instructional leadership roles in Type 1AB and Type C schools in Sri Lanka. The objectives of this study were to find out what kind of instructional leadership roles do principals in secondary schools in Sri Lanka play in promoting the education of students and upgrading the pedagogy of teachers, Identify how do teachers perceive leadership roles of principals in different categories of secondary schools in Sri Lanka and to find out what problems principals face when engaging in instructional leadership roles in secondary schools. The study was carried out in association with two hundred sample units of teacher and six school principals targeting to answer the research questions that were built. A mixed method approach was adopted. A questionnaire and interview schedules were used as data collection instruments. The data collected through the questionnaire were presented by using percentages and tables. The data collected through the interviews were analyzed by using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that a significant number of teachers (88%) in Type 1AB schools have positive perceptions about the instructional leadership roles principals engage in their schools. Also the findings indicated that the principals of type 1AB schools perform instructional leadership roles at a satisfactory level. However, the principals of 1-C schools do not perform instructional leadership roles at a satisfactory level due to the major challenge of having engaged in general administration roles than instructional leadership roles. It further revealed from this study that educational standards of the students in 1AB schools are higher than the educational achievements of students in Type 1-C schools. The study further revealed that the opportunities available for principals to acquire leadership training at an appropriate stage in their career are limited. It is, therefore, recommended that, the principals must be trained at an appropriate stage of their career in order for them to provide facilities for teachers professional development.

Keywords: Instructional Leadership roles, Type 1AB Schools, Type 1C Schools, Perception, Motivation.

Introduction

School principals must be effective instructional leaders and be able to provide support, guidance and mentoring to teachers to bring about improvement in school performance and student learning achievements. In particular, instructional leadership focuses on the teaching learning process that takes place in the classroom and the principal's influence is aimed at improving student learning and teacher motivation (Blasé & Blasé 2010, Kumari 2021a, 2021b, 2022e). In this manner all school leadership tasks should be aimed at improving school performance results. Instructional leadership roles of school principals have been identified as one of the most important roles and also a key factor in terms of the professional development of teachers and

their motivation. Also, it has been found that the main purpose of engaging in instructional leadership role is to support teachers to improve their pedagogical skills which directly benefit students' high level of educational performance (Bush 2008, Kumari 2022a, 2022b,). There are widespread beliefs that the quality of leadership makes a significant difference to school and student outcomes. Leithwood et al., (2008) found that all school members and other stakeholders are influenced by leadership of higher- achieving schools to a significantly greater degree than that of lower achieving schools. Mulford et al.,(2003) carried out a study to identify the effects of leadership on student learning and found that there are two main factors that affect to improve student outcomes.

According to Waters et al., (2004) and Pillegedara et,al (2021) effective leadership of school principals can significantly enhance pupil achievement. As mentioned by them when principals engage in instructional leadership roles such as monitoring the teaching learning process, holding post observation conferences and providing feedback and support, providing incentives and resources on time, coordinating curriculum, evaluate students progress, protect instructional time, provide incentives for teaching and learning will directly affect improving the quality of the teaching learning process. Similarly, Quinn (2002) shows that the leadership role of the principal is important in creating a happy working environment and thereby achieves exceptional educational outcomes. Southworth, (2004) carried out a research focusing on leading small, medium and large sized schools in England and emphasized the importance of learning centered leadership in schools. According to him efficient and effective leaders exercise both direct and indirect influence in implementing reforms and improving students' levels of achievement. Researchers found that classroom observation is one of the most common ways of reflecting on pedagogical practices which can help teachers evaluate their strengths and weaknesses (Farrell 2011, Kumari 2022c, 2022d). The success of the school is mostly dependent on the principal's ability to supervise the teachers to explain instructional goals and work as a team to improve classroom instruction. (Blasé, Blasé & Philips, 2010; Smylie, 2010, Kumari 2014, 2019). Anderson et al., (2008) and Kumari (2022e) recognized instructional leadership of the principal as one of the most important tools that can be used in building effective professional development of teachers. They further emphasized that there is a direct relationship between instructional leadership and the professional development of teachers. These references are very cogent for the current study which focuses on instructional leadership roles of principals in different categories of secondary schools in Sri Lanka and critically explore the extent to which more effective adoption of instructional leadership practices by principals enhance learning and teaching performance. In this connection school principals can use instructional leadership as an effective tool or leadership style in terms of enhancing the school success. Therefore, this study focused on investigating the role of instructional leadership of principals working in Type 1AB and 1C schools in Sri Lanka. This study looks at the instructional leadership role by school principals on the pedagogical practices and professional development of teachers in Type 1AB and 1C schools in Sri Lanka.

Statement of the Problem

The main purpose of instructional leadership is to support teachers to improve their pedagogical skills which directly benefit students' high level of educational performance. Also, it has been found that there is a direct relationship between instructional leadership roles played by principals and the professional development of teachers. Researchers believe that principals as instructional leaders in the school be supposed to engage in the role of instructional leadership (Sothworth 2004, Bush 2008, Hallinger & Murphy 1986, Kumari 2019, 2020, Malkanthi 2021, wickramanayake 2022a, 2022b) Therefore, the principal as an instructional leader of the school should engage in instructional leadership roles such as supervision of instruction, holding post observational conferences and providing the feedback necessary for teachers to enhance skills with regard to classroom teaching, providing incentives, coordinating the curriculum and protecting instructional time. However, there is a growing concern about the little attention to instructional leadership roles by principals working in different categories of secondary schools

in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study focused on investigating the role of instructional leadership of principals working in Type 1AB and Type 1C schools in Sri Lanka.

Purpose and objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine how principals engage in instructional leadership roles in Type 1AB and Type 1C schools in Sri Lanka. Therefore the specific research questions of the study were;

1. What kind of instructional leadership roles do principals in secondary schools in Sri Lanka play in promoting the education of students and upgrading the pedagogy of teachers?
2. How do teachers perceive leadership roles of principals in different categories of secondary schools in Sri Lanka?
3. What problems principals face when engaging in instructional leadership roles in secondary schools

Methodology

The mixed methodology was employed in this study. Accordingly, both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were applied. The first phase of the research was a descriptive survey which employed the questionnaire. Based on the findings of the first phase the second phase was launched which consisted of semi-structured interviews. As explained by Tashakkori & Teddlie, (1998) combining quantitative and qualitative approaches within different stages of the research process is possible. Accordingly, two phases of the study, a quantitative phase, followed by a qualitative phase was included in the research design. As explained by Newby (2010) mixed methods research is becoming an increasingly popular approach in the fields of sociology, psychology, education and health sciences. Supporting this Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) stated that the combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single study provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone can provide.

Study Sample

The following table shows the total number of study samples of the current study

Table No. 1: Study Sample

School Type	School Sample	Principal Sample	Teacher Sample
Type 1AB	03	03	100
Type 1C	03	03	100
Total	06	06	200

Accordingly, the study sample included two hundred teachers randomly selected from 06 governments Type 1AB and Type 1C schools and 06 school principals.

Data Collection Instruments.

In order collect the necessary data and information of this study, a survey questionnaire, semi-structured interviews protocol were used. Accordingly, the instruments used for data collection were researchers-developed questionnaires for teachers and semi- structured interview schedules for principal. As mentioned by Cohen et al., (2008) the questionnaire is one of the most important data collection instruments as it plays a significant role in terms of collecting a wide range of data from a large sample unit. They further mentioned that there are different types of questionnaires such as close-ended, open-ended, structured and unstructured and the researchers can use any type of questionnaire depending on the aim and nature of the study. The items selected for the questionnaire and interview in the current study were based on the Instructional Management Framework introduced by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). Accordingly, nine main roles related to instructional leadership such as framing clear school goals, communicating

school goals, supervising and evaluating instructions, coordinating curriculum, monitoring students' progress, protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility and provide incentives for teaching and learning were included. The teacher questionnaire had two sections. Section A contained items regarding the respondent's profile while section B had two sub-sections designed to identify principals' instructional leadership roles. The teacher questionnaire consisted of 10 items that covers the areas of principals' instructional leadership role as perceived by the teachers. Five-point scale with a response mode of Always (5 points), Very Often (4 points), Sometimes (3 points), Rarely (2 points) and Never (1 point) was used to measure the item responses. In addition, interview protocols were used for the second phase of the study. Interviews have been identified as the most common method of data collection in qualitative research. According to Creswell (2003), semi-structured interview is deemed the most appropriate way to obtain in-depth information about the experience of individuals. Presenting a similar view Jamshed (2014) mentioned the importance of semi structured interviews. According to him semi structured interviews are a format with broad and in-depth open-ended questions which prepared before eliciting responses. Accordingly, interview protocols of the current study consisted of 6 unstructured questions. Purposely selected 6 principals were interviewed. The instruments were pilot tested to make sure about the validity and reliability. Four research assistants were trained in administering the questionnaire. The consent of the principals of selected 6 schools of Type 1AB and Type 1C was given and a questionnaire was administered to the teachers in the schools. The principals were interviewed by the researcher herself. Respondents were properly guided to avoid misunderstanding the purpose of the study. The exercise was completed within a month.

Data Analysis

The current study based on sequential explanatory mix methodology, the data which collected in the first phase were analysed first. As mentioned by Stephanie and Roger (2019) there are two methods in which a data analysis can be summarized. One is summary statistics and the other one is tabulations. According to them the first form can be presented as mean or standard deviation and the second can be presented in a column and row format. Accordingly, frequency distributions and percentages that come under descriptive statistics were mainly used for analyzing data and cross-tabulation, histograms and bar-charts were used to show the analyzed results. As the second phase of the study was consisted of semi structured interviews, thematic analysis was used mainly for analyzing qualitative data. Daly et. al. (2000) identified thematic analysis as a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the data that have been collected. Accordingly, interview data were analyzed thematically. Altogether 200 questionnaires were distributed and 185 (93%) teachers completed the questionnaire. Therefore, the analysis was done using the 185 questionnaires that were responded to.

Findings

The data presentation, analysis, interpretations and discussion of findings are presented in this section. The first objective of the study was to find out what kind of instructional leadership roles do principals in secondary schools in Sri Lanka play in promoting the education of students and upgrading the pedagogy of teachers? In terms of the responses obtained to the question "How often does your principal engage in following instructional leadership roles?" irrespective of school type more than 65% of teachers from the entire sample responded that their principals formulate clear school goals and communicate them among staff 'Very Often', 66% of teachers responded that principals "Sometimes" engage in supervision and evaluation of instructions. Compared to this, the percentages of teachers who had responded 'Sometimes' to principals coordinate curriculum were less amounting to 60%. It further revealed that a significant number of teachers (69 %) had responded that irrespective of school type principals engage in protecting instructional time. This situation has been shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Teacher response for the principals instructional leadership roles

Principals Instructional leadership roles	Always		Very Often		Sometime s		Rarely		Never		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Framing clear school goals	30	16	128	69	14	8	11	6	02	1	185	100
Communicate clear school goals	35	19	120	65	15	8	13	7	02	1	185	100
Supervising & evaluating instructions	14	8	18	10	122	66	20	11	11	5	185	100
Coordinating curriculum	18	10	73	39	60	32	27	15	7	4	185	100
Monitoring students' progress	14	8	27	15	115	62	15	8	14	8	185	100
Protecting instructional time	35	19	128	69	14	8	6	3	2	1	185	100
Promoting professional development	36	19	70	38	61	33	18	10	0		185	100
Maintaining high visibility	61	33	71	38	40	22	11	6	2	1	185	100
Providing incentives for teaching and learning	60	32	66	36	42	23	8	4	9	5	185	100

This position has been further depicted in figure 2 below

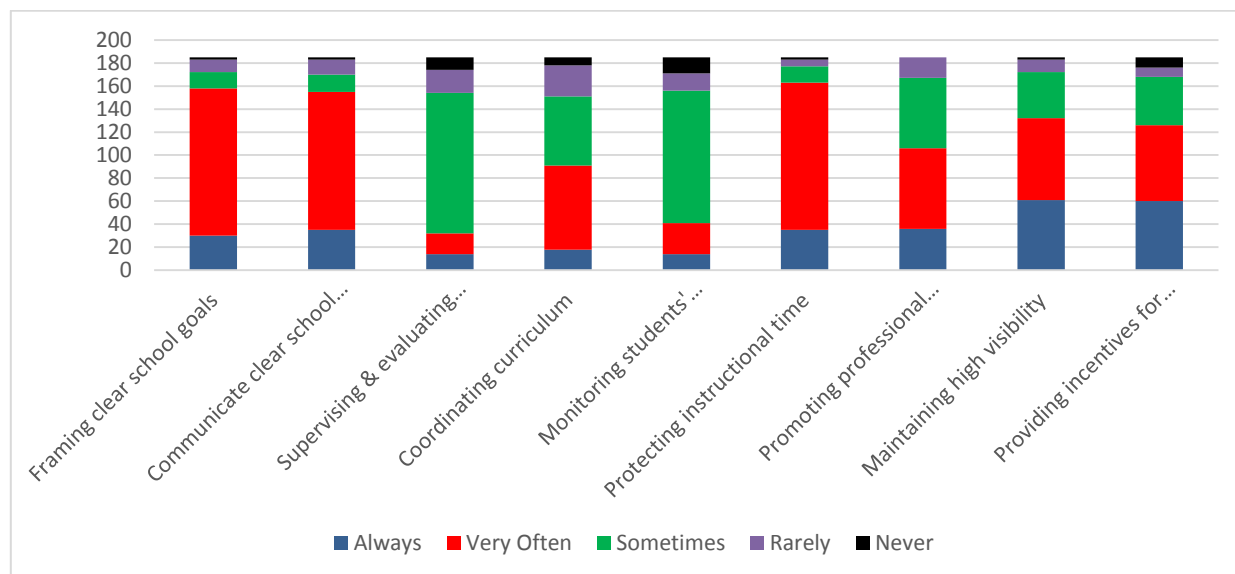


Figure 1: Teacher response for the principals instructional leadership roles

Principals' interviews in all 6 schools of Type 1AB and Type 1C schools also gave strong evidence that principals engage in the observation of instruction, coordinating the curriculum and protect instructional time. Principal 2 from Type 1C school mentioned that they do not have enough time to directly engage in evaluating students' progress and professional development of teachers. Provision of incentive for teaching and learning is the key to improve quality of

education. Hallinger and Murphy (1986) emphasize the importance of the provision of incentives for teaching and learning. Therefore, a question was asked from the principals and teachers about provision of incentives for teaching and learning. According to the responses obtained to the question, “Do you provide incentives for teaching and learning? If yes, can you explain how you provide them?” All the principals in the sample responded that incentives were provided in advance for teaching and learning.

Principal 2 in the 1-AB School commented,

“Teachers and students are motivated by providing all the facilities they need to make the teaching learning process more efficient and effective. In addition, special teacher training programmes have been introduced to help teachers who do not have training and teachers who have training also have been provided opportunity to update their training by participating in seminars, workshops...”

(Principal 2 from 1-AB School)

Presenting a similar view principal 4 from 1C school also commented,

“We provide facilities for both teachers and students to make the teaching learning process a success. However, we should say that our schools are not known as the best equipped schools like the 1-AB. Therefore, we don’t have sufficient facilities. However, we try our best to provide facilities through obtaining support from the stakeholders.....”

(Principal 4 from 1-C School)

According to the above extracts of the responses of principals and teachers of Type 1AB and Type 1C schools, it is clear that the principals working in both categories of schools engage in different types of instructional leadership roles and thereby contribute for enhancing the quality of pedagogy in secondary schools in Sri Lanka.

The second objective of the study was to find out how do teachers perceive leadership roles of principals in different categories of secondary schools in Sri Lanka? In terms of the responses obtained to the statement “Principal in your school promote students learning and professional development of teachers through actively engaging in instructional leadership roles” A significant number of teachers (88%) of all three 1-AB schools “Fully Agree” with the statement expressing a positive attitudes about principals instructional leadership roles. However, the majority of teachers (76%) of all three 1-C schools had negative perceptions about the practice of instructional leadership roles by their principals need careful attention. This was further supported by interview with principal of Type 1C schools where there was a perception

“The lack of facilities and attention by the Ministry of Education and other responsible authorities and also the deprived socio, economic and cultural background from which the majority of students came were the main issues and challenges in Type 1-C schools in terms of practicing instructional leadership roles.....”

It was further revealed that most principals in both categories of schools believed their schools should offer leadership education and training opportunities. This finding is important for several reasons. If principals working in different categories of schools are not engaged in instructional leadership roles to a satisfactory level it may be seen as not providing necessary leadership training opportunities to improve the leadership skills of the principals who work in the same categories of schools and obtain professional development. As mentioned by Haris et al., (2008) the supervision and observation of the instruction as an instructional leadership role is very important concerning the enhancement of quality of teaching and learning and also staff development.

The third objective of the study was to find out the problems principals face when engaging in instructional leadership roles in secondary schools. According to the responses obtained to the question of “What challenges you face as a principal when implementing instructional leadership

roles in your school” irrespective of school type all six principals stated that they have to face several problems and challenges when implementing instructional leadership roles in their schools. However, they mentioned that the challenges they face differ according to the type of school. For example, principal 5 commented,

“As a principal I have to face lots of challenges in terms of implementing instructional leadership roles due to engaging in general administration roles in our school. Due to this reason I find it difficult to find time to supervise and evaluate instructional process and provide feedback for teachers professional development and”

(Principal 5 from 1C School)

It was further revealed from this study that there is no adequate trained teachers and physical resources particularly in Type 1C schools. Further it could find that the educational achievements of the students in Type 1C schools are lower than the educational achievements of students in Type 1AB schools. This situation of Type 1C schools encourages students and teachers to find a so called 1AB school. Due to these situation principals of these particular type schools face number of issues pertaining to retention of both students and teachers in their schools and implement instructional leadership roles.

The study further revealed that the opportunities available for principals to acquire leadership training at an appropriate stage in their career are limited. It is, therefore, recommended that, the principals must be trained at an appropriate stage of their career in order for them to engage in instructional leadership roles and thereby enhance the quality of instructions. Also the majority of principals in both types of schools in 1AB and 1C reported that they had inadequate opportunities to participate in leadership training workshops.

It is clear from the findings of this research that this situation needs careful attention as professional development and updating knowledge in terms of skill development related to leadership is the key to enhance the quality of education and school development. Therefore, the findings of this research highlight the importance of taking necessary initiatives so as to promote training opportunities for principals who work in different categories of schools in Sri Lanka

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study revealed that all six principals and a significant number of teachers working in Type 1AB and Type 1C schools have positive perceptions of the role of instructional leadership. They believe that the quality of education can be improved through the practice of instructional leadership roles. However, it found from this study that the instructional leadership roles were not practice satisfactorily in type 1C schools in Sri Lanka. Also, principals in these particular types of schools do not engage in instructional supervision evaluation of students' progress due to the major challenge of having engaged in general administration roles than instructional leadership roles. This finding is not different from that of Udeshika (2020) and Kumari ((2021), who found their investigation that principals are away from supervision in schools even though instructional supervision is the most important mechanism by which the instructional supervisor could be of great facilitator in providing the professional development of teachers. As mentioned by Hallinger et. al., (2008, Kumari, 2019, Udeshika , 2020) the instructional leadership roles are very important concerning the improvement of quality of teaching and learning, educational achievements of students and also staff development. The results further revealed that the irrespective of school type retention of qualified, experienced teachers has become a major challenge for principals working particularly in type 1C schools as teachers of these schools are trying to get transfers to so-called “1AB schools” in the country.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Educational programmes and practices in leadership education must acknowledge all school types and their contribution to the development of the school system of Sri Lanka in order that all principals and teachers can acquire the knowledge and skills that they need to use effectively

in terms of achieving school success. The review of the literature shows that the leadership policies in education encourage the acquisition of various leadership skills among principals all over the world (Marzano and McNulty (2005), Crow et al., (2008), Pheko (2008), Oduro and Macbeath (2003), Bush and Glower et al., (2004). However, research findings of the current study show that, overall, the principals of Type 1C schools have limited leadership competencies compared to principals from 1-AB Schools. Therefore, there needs to be serious consideration of how to ensure equity in leadership competence among all principals. Therefore, the following recommendations are made in order to develop leadership education.

The participants of this research claimed that there was no adequate leadership training opportunities for principals to review, upgrade or otherwise improve their knowledge base. Understanding and developing their roles as school leaders in school contexts for leading within different categories of schools in Sri Lanka will require a renewed effort in professional development at national level to enable principals to develop the necessary practices. Hence, it is recommended to conduct programmes viz pre-principal training and support for ongoing professional training, and collegial learning opportunities for serving principals. In addition, all types of schools should be provided adequate human, physical and financial resources in time by the relevant authorities for enabling principals to lead their schools effectively since they do not have power and authority to recruit staff.

Therefore, it is recommended to enhance the pedagogical practices of teachers and their professional development through the implementation of instructional leadership roles by the school principals

Further, it is recommended that Principals working in different categories of schools should be adequately trained about the instructional leadership roles and their importance in enhancing the quality of education and school development through seminars and conferences. Regular in-service training is recommended not only for principals but also for sectional heads and subject heads on school leadership. It is also recommended that the Ministry of Education organize regular inspection programmes of schools to examine the attitude of principals, sectional heads and subjects heads and also the challenges they face in terms of implementation of instructional leadership roles in their schools.

Finally, it is recommended for future researchers to consider the instructional leadership roles played by principals working in primary and also international school covering other educational zones as this study is limited only to the Type 1AB and Type 1C Schools in the Colombo Educational Zone.

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